

WENTWORTH MINE

Airing of the Quilts

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GOLD QUILTERS CHALLENGE

Gold mining at Lucknow

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Payable gold was discovered at Ophir near Orange in April 1851 and at Summer Hill Creek in Fredericks Valley in June 1851. This became the Wentworth Mines until a small town known as Lucknow appeared.

The geology of Summer Hill Creek valley around Lucknow produced a quite distinctive quality of gold, deposited on the junction between serpentine, augite and quartz veins.

1851 - 1857

The area now known as Lucknow was largely controlled by the landowner, W. C. Wentworth, who encouraged a degree of mining, first alluvial and then shaft, in return for a share of the profits. The original licences to prospect were accordingly private ones, and originally in August 1851 restricted to Wentworth tenants.

1864 - 1866

The shaft-mines on 24 claims throughout Lucknow produced no less than six tons of gold. The names of the mines operating in this period include: Golden Point, Phoenix, Spicer's (or United Miners) and Uncle Tom. Other mines included Crinoline, Four Sailors, Golden Gate, Homeward Bound, Industry Rewarded, John Bull, Mitchell's, Morning Star, Shamrock and Snobs. The principal figure of this period, H. W. Newman, who came, more or less penniless, in 1862, was the first to strike the lode some 20 metres down at his Homeward Bound mine. As he later reminisced, 'ten loads in an old puddling machine gave 2,000 oz. Sludge kept and later treated gave an additional 98ozs so that the

10 loads gave 2098 oz. We had 40 feet of ground and in nine months worked it by hand and horse to 190 feet, obtaining 28,000 pounds divided between four men.'

The prosperity of the mines immediately brought amenities to the bag town of mining claims. The first post-office opened in 1863. The first postmaster, John Ford Rae gave up the position in 1865, recommended that Newman succeed him. Newman left Lucknow and the postmastership briefly in 1866 when he apparently lost his first fortune, but returned in 1867 and from 1877 until 1891 he was again postmaster, with his office and general store built in front of his fine surviving house called Mamhead. Shortly after the post office, a Lucknow school opened in 1864, accommodating thirty pupils in a bark hut, which was replaced in 1878 by the new building which continued as a primary school until 1974.

This period of frantic activity ended in 1867 when most diggings were deserted, although Newman's purchase of the Uncle Tom claim in 1867 produced a great deal of gold in 1869-70, and was sold for a huge profit shortly afterwards. The reports of the Department of Mines in the 1870s show little activity and the field as a whole did not revive until the 1880s. Nonetheless the Anglican Church, the only one of Lucknow's churches to survive today, was built in 1873 in bluestone with sandstone quoins and window surrounds.

The men who worked the mines followed strict rules:

- Workers if called upon had to submit to a search at any time or place, in a manner that management appointed. Searching may have extended to the whole of the miners property or premises
- The publication or communication of the company's business was strictly forbidden
- No sample or specimen of rock or ore was to be taken from the mine, mill or truck
- Half an hour was allowed per shift for crib.

1882 - 1887

The principal figure in the recovery of the 1880s was again W. H. Newman. The geological surveyor C. S. Wilkinson had commented in 1881 that the development of the field depended primarily on the deeper workings of known veins at 500' in Homeward Bound and 387' at Newman's Reform, a development of Uncle Tom. There was every likelihood, Wilkinson concluded, 'that these veins, or shoots, may be profitably worked to greater depths; but owing to the limited horizontal extent (from 20 to 50 feet) of each shoot along the lode, they will each probably have to be mined separately, somewhat after the system now 80 economically carried out in the "Reform Mine" under the able management of Mr. Newman. Newman's 'skill and perseverance', 'Able and indefatigable management' were again praised by the mining warden in 1884 and 1885.

Newman's company, the New Reform Gold-mining Company, in which Newman was a substantial shareholder as well as manager developed on a much more capitalised basis in this period. Newman opened up another shaft in the late 1880s and his New Reform Pups had reached 225' with 25 employees in 1888, but the New Reform itself had hit poorer veins, Newman put it up for sale in 1889.

AFTER THE SLUMP OF 1889

Entirely new companies began to exploit the Lucknow field, although Newman continued to be deeply involved. More of the Wentworth estate was purchased and the Wentworth Goldfield Pty. Co. Ltd, (which was in no way owned by the Wentworth family) was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1890 with a subsidiary company. The Aladdin's Lamp Gold Mining Co. Ltd. formed two years later. This company sank much deeper shafts, the New Main to 883' Jackass (950'). Phoenix and Aladdin's Lamp.

1929 - 1935

Prospecting rarely ever ceases on a once lucrative gold-field and in 1928-9 companies such as St. Aignan's (New Guinea) Gold Lodes N.L. and Lucknow Gold Options Co. were quite busy. In particular St. Aignan's found a rich 'brown vein' away from 'that portion already riddled with holes', at a depth of only 38 feet. The Bismark shaft was sunk to 92 feet unsuccessfully.

Old workings such as Digby's were pumped clear of water. The old Extension was reopened as Bismark Deeps and in general the 1930s presented a confusion of interlocking, impermanent companies operating through shafts old and new.

1940

There has been a flurry of legal activity with a bewilderment of companies, many associated with the name of Alexander Marshall, and considerable doubt about the exact ownership of mining rights. All this has obscured the fact that virtually no productive mining has been done. The files of the Department of Mineral Resources in Orange show that what work has been done consists largely of clearing old shafts (Spicer's 1958-60, Reform, St. Aignan and Bisark in 1968) and exploratory studies in 1966-1 by Peko Wallsend.

1959

The Reform was reopened using the battery which is still at The Wentworth Main. In 1983 Mr Ken Trotman who had been involved in 1959 was pumping water out of the Reform shaft to use for irrigation on local orchards.

SOCIAL LIFE IN LUCKNOW

The men toiled a 12 hour day in the depths of the tunnels for the equivalent to \$4.00 per week. To keep the workers happy, Mine Manager Henry Newman introduced an array of social activities. This in turn would benefit the company.

A monthly ball was held in the Miner's Hall and on pay night dances were held. The ball opened at 8 o'clock with a band of performers playing until 10pm, when refreshments were provided for the ladies. Waltzes and circular dances bought an enjoyable evening to a close at 11.30pm.

Mr Newman organised picnics where a band played music, sack races, three legged races and cricket was played. He and his wife also donated winning prizes.

LUCKNOW TODAY

The village has a large potential to attract tourists. The iron head-frames at Wentworth Main and at Reform, right beside the highway in the village area with their accompanying equipment, are the most strikingly accessible of gold mining memorials. At Wentworth Main moreover, the largest of the iron sheds still contains a great deal of equipment, including the stamper battery and various engines. In the paddock to the west of the highway there is isolated equipment- a boiler, a winding engine. The winding-house for Reform still stands.

